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Further Reading:

Lavelle, M.J., Rau, H. and Fahy, F. (2015) 'Different shades of green? Unpacking habitual and occasional pro-environmental behavior' *Global Environmental Change* Vol. 35 pp. 368-378.

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<http://www.consensus.ie>.

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Read More About: The [Environment, Development, and Sustainability cluster](#) within the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change.

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Segmenting for Sustainability on the Island of Ireland

This research argues for a disaggregation of pro-environmental behaviour into habitual and occasional behaviour. The former captures routine everyday activities such as regularly buying organic food or habitually conserving water. The latter describes occasional activities such as installing insulation and purchasing energy-efficient household appliances. Drawing on a survey of 1,500 households in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland that developed both behavioural and attitudinal indices to investigate household consumption, we group respondents according to their scoring on each index.

Results

Two typologies of consumers were identified based on occasional and habitual behaviour and pro-environmental attitudes, and four groupings were classified under each of the two typologies. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis and the application of cut-off criteria to produce two groups for each of the three scales (respondents with scores below threshold versus those with scores above and at the threshold), eight different groups of consumers were constructed. The four groups in the occasional behaviour typology (Typology 1 in Table 1) were labelled as: Dark-Greens, Browns, Light-Greens and Yellows. Regarding habitual behaviour, four different labels were used: Ever-Greens, Aspiring-Greens, Accidental-Greens and Never-Greens (Typology 2 in Table 2). An extensive overview of all profiling of all groupings is available in the full report (see Lavelle et al. 2015). The profiling was based on socio-demographic characteristics, as well as differences across the groupings in relation to the four areas of consumption studied: water, transport, food and energy consumption.

Table 1 : Typology 1

Respondents' expressed attitudes by occasional pro-environmental behaviours.









	Occasional behaviours +	Occasional behaviours -
Pro-environmental attitudes +	Dark Greens 	Yellows 
Pro-environmental attitudes -	Light Greens 	Browns 

Table 2 : Typology 2

Respondents' expressed attitudes by habitual pro-environmental behaviours.

	Habitual behaviours +	Habitual behaviours -
Pro-environmental attitudes +	Ever Greens 	Aspiring Greens 
Pro-environmental attitudes -	Accidental Greens 	Never Greens 

Given the differences in the composition of the 'green' acting and 'brown' acting groups across the two typologies (i.e. occasional and habitual behaviour), the results would suggest that a distinction needs to be made



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between habitual and occasional pro-environmental behaviour.

For this reason, the authors compared respondents categorised as ‘green’ acting in terms of Typology 1 (attitudes by occasional behaviour) with the ‘green’ acting group in Typology 2 (attitudes by habitual behaviour) and concluded that relatively little overlap exists between those respondents categorised as ‘green’ based on their occasional behaviours (7%) and those individuals who are categorised as ‘green’ acting in relation to their habitual behaviours (19%). Only 35 respondents (2.3% of the total sample) who were classified as ‘green’ according to their occasional behaviours also engaged in ‘green’ habitual behaviours. We term this very small group of ‘green’ acting individuals as ‘True-Greens’.

Figure 1:
Overview of four groupings positioned along an attitude-occasional behaviour continuum.

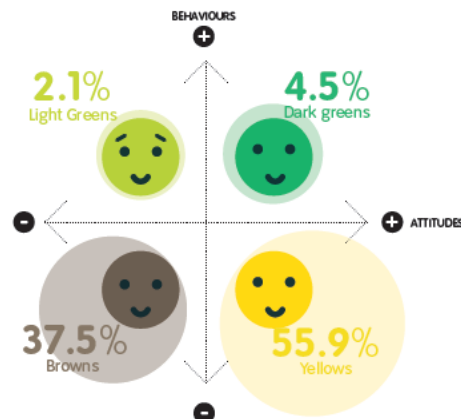
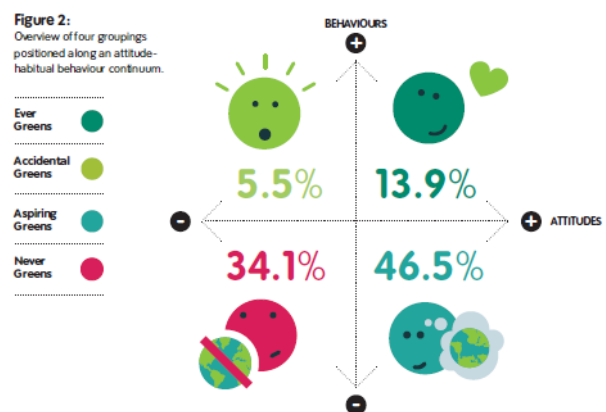


Figure 2:
Overview of four groupings positioned along an attitude-habitual behaviour continuum.



Policy Implications

Results show that the socio-demographic and attitudinal profiles of households that report habitual pro-environmental behaviour differ significantly from those that engage in occasional actions. This clearly impacts on environmental and sustainability policy, most notably the financial incentivisation of sustainable consumption. Moreover, significant social sustainability issues arise, with rewards for occasional activities disproportionately benefiting better-off households while those who engage in routine pro-environmental behaviour tend to face higher costs.